

a set of program instructions for calculating a shipping rate for shipping the particular parcel to be shipped by the particular user for each of a plurality of services offered by each of the plurality of carriers according to a set of billing option rules for each carrier, and according to a set of pricing rules for each service offered by each carrier as applied to the parcel specifications for the particular parcel and the billing option preference input by the particular user.

RESPONSE AND REMARKS

Original Claims 1 through 21 remain in the application; new dependent Claims 2, 3, 11, 12, 20 and 21 have been added; original Claims 2 through 8 have been renumbered as Claims 4 through 10 respectively; original Claims 9 through 15 have been renumbered as Claims 13 through 19; original Claims 16 through 21 have been renumbered as Claims 23 through 27 respectively; claim dependencies of original claims have been respectively renumbered. The punctuation of original Claims 4, 11 and 18, now renumbered as Claims 6, 15, and 24, respectfully, have been amended. Entry of these amendments, renumberings, and dependency renumberings and reconsideration of the amended application are respectfully requested.

The recent telephone interviews on February 10, 2003 and February 13, 2003 between the Primary Examiner, Mr. Kenneth R. Rice, and attorney for Applicant, are gratefully acknowledged with appreciation. During those interviews, the Primary Examiner indicated that an amendment to original independent claims 1, 8 and 15 to more particularly define the claim element "billing option rules" would place the application in condition for allowance. Pursuant to the interviews with the Primary Examiner, entry of the foregoing amendments to independent claims 1, 8 and 15 (now Renumbered as Claims 1, 10, and 19 respectively) is requested to more particularly define the phrase "billing option rule" for each carrier to comprise at least one of: an indication of billing options acceptable to the carrier and a pricing rule for one or more billing options.

The disclosed and claimed multi-carrier, multi-service, parcel shipping management system billing option feature solves a problem in dealing with multiple parcel shipping carriers in that each carrier may have different rules for accepting

different billing options (also referred to as "payment methods"). In some cases, one or more particular carriers may not accept certain types of billing options (or payment methods). In some cases, even if a particular carrier accepts a particular billing option/payment method, the carrier may charge more, or less, for the use of certain billing options -- for example, a particular carrier may charge more if a user uses a certain type of credit card.

Some systems, such as for example, the shipping kiosk disclosed by the Ramsden reference (Ramsden et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,656,799, "Ramsden") cited by the Examiner, provide a limited choice as to payment methods. For example, the Ramsden reference discloses that "[d]ifferent types of credit or debit cards as well as cash are suitable for payment . . ." (Ramsden, col. 27, lines 16-18).

As discussed in the above-acknowledged telephone interviews, there is no disclosure in Ramsden that the Ramsden kiosk supports payment methods other than those that are accepted by all carriers that subscribe to use of the Ramsden kiosk. There is no disclosure in Ramsden, or in the other cited reference (Roach et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,310,997, "Roach"), that the choice of payment methods offered by the referenced systems include payment methods that are treated differently by one or more of a plurality of carriers. For example, Ramsden does not disclose the ability to accept as input a payment method that will not be accepted by one or more carriers. The U-Ship Credit Card User test in step 812 of FIG. 22a of the Ramsden patent cited by the Examiner during one of the telephone interviews does not disclose different treatment by one or more carriers. Rather, as disclosed in the specification of the Ramsden patent (col. 27, lines 33-60), entry of a "vendor issued credit card" causes the display of names of recent recipients to whom the particular customer sent packages using the Ramsden system. Ramsden col. 27, lines 33-40. Further, Ramsden does not disclose the ability to differentiate parcel shipment pricing according to the billing option rules for different carriers.

The claims of the present application are patentable over the cited references because, as distinguished from the cited Ramsden and Roach references, the present invention provides the capability to present as billing method preference options for selection or input by a user a number of billing methods, some of which are acceptable

to one or more carriers, and some of which are not acceptable to one or more carriers. (see the present application, e.g., page 56, lines 5 through 27 and FIGS. 36b and 36c). Specifically, original claims 1, 8 and 15 (as amended; Renumbered as Claims 1, 10 and 19 respectively) are patentable over the cited references because, as distinguished from the cited Ramsden and Roach references, each of original Claims 1, 8 and 15 (Renumbered as Claims 1, 10 and 19 respectively) of the present invention applies each carrier's billing option rules to each user's preferred billing (payment method) option wherein the "billing option rules" for each carrier comprise at least one of: an indication of billing options acceptable to the carrier and a pricing rule for one or more billing options.

For the foregoing reasons, because original Claims 1, 8 and 15 (as amended; Renumbered as Claims 1, 10 and 19 respectively) of the present invention are patentable over the cited references, Applicant respectfully submits that added dependent Claims 2, 3, 11, 12, 20 and 21 are also patentable over the cited references.

Original Claims 2, 9 and 16 (Renumbered as Claims 4, 13 and 22 respectively) are patentable over the cited references because each of original claims 2, 9 and 16 (Renumbered as Claims 4, 13 and 22 respectively) provide for identifying each carrier, from a plurality of carriers, that supports a particular billing option preference. As previously mentioned above, the cited references do not disclose the ability to accept as input a payment method that will not be accepted by one or more carriers; the cited references do not disclose any determination or identification of carriers that support certain payment methods.

Original Claims 3, 10 and 17 (Renumbered as Claims 5, 14, and 23 respectively) are patentable over the cited references because each of claims 3, 10 and 17 (Renumbered as Claims 5, 14, and 23 respectively) provide for storing in a database a record corresponding to each user an identifier for the particular user and a billing option preference for that user. The cited references do not disclose storing a billing option preference for each user.

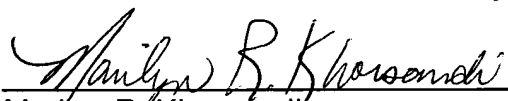
For the foregoing reasons, because original claims 3, 10 and 17 (Renumbered as Claims 5, 14, and 23 respectively) are patentable over the cited references, original dependent Claims 4 through 7 (Renumbered as Claims 6 through 9 respectively),

original dependent Claims 11 through 14 (Renumbered as Claims 15 through 18 respectively) and original dependent Claims 18 through 21 (Renumbered as Claims 24 through 27 respectively), which are dependent on original claims 3, 10 and 17 respectively (Renumbered as Claims 5, 14, and 23 respectively), are patentable over the cited references.

In view of the foregoing amendments, Applicant respectfully submits that the invention disclosed and claimed in the present amended application is not fairly taught by any of the references of record, taken either alone or in combination and that the application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests allowance of the amended application.

Respectfully submitted,

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INTERLINEATED VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Claims

Original Claims 1 through 21 remain in the application; new dependent Claims 2, 3, 11, 12, 20 and 21 have been added; original Claims 2 through 8 are renumbered as Claims 4 through 10 respectively; original Claims 9 through 15 are renumbered as Claims 13 through 19; original Claims 16 through 21 are renumbered as Claims 23 through 27 respectively; claim dependencies have been respectively renumbered. The punctuation of original Claims 4, 11 and 18, now renumbered as Claims 6, 15, and 24, respectfully, have been amended. Entry of these amendments, renumberings, and dependency renumberings, interlineated versions of which follow with markings to show changes, is respectfully requested.

1. (Currently Amended) A shipping management computer system, said shipping management computer system programmed to:

apply, in response to a request by any particular user of a plurality of users, a set of billing option rules for each of a plurality of carriers to a single billing option preference input by the particular requesting user, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global communications network, and wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises at least one of: an indication of billing options acceptable to the carrier and a pricing rule for one or more billing options.

2. (New) The shipping management computer system of Claim 1 wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises an indication of billing options acceptable to the carrier.

3. (New) The shipping management computer system of Claim 1 wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises a pricing rule for one or more billing options.

24. (Original Claim 2 Currently Amended) A shipping management computer system, said shipping management computer system programmed to:

identify, in response to a request by any particular user of a plurality of users, each carrier from a plurality of carriers that supports a particular billing option preference input by the particular requesting user for shipping a particular parcel, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global communications network.

35. (Original Claim 3 Currently Amended) A shipping management computer system, said shipping management computer system programmed to:

collect as a billing option preference for each particular user of a plurality of users a user input from the particular user of an identification of a billing option preference for parcels to be shipped by the particular user, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client computer having an individual electronic connection to the global communications network;

store in a database a record corresponding to each particular user, said record comprising an identifier for the particular user and the billing option preference for the particular user.

46. (Original Claim 4 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 3) The shipping management computer system of claim 35, said shipping management computer system further programmed to:

collect as parcel specifications for a particular parcel, user input from the particular user wherein the parcel specifications comprising at least one of: a package type, a set of package dimensions, or a package weight of the particular parcel;

57. (Original Claim 5 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 4) The shipping management computer system of claim 46, said shipping management computer system further programmed to:

apply a set of billing option rules for each of a plurality of carriers to the billing option preference and parcel specifications input by the particular user.

68. (Original Claim 6 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 5) The shipping management computer system of claim 57, said shipping management computer system further programmed to:

determine for each of the plurality of carriers whether the carrier supports the billing option preference according to the billing option rules for the particular carrier as applied to the parcel specifications for the particular parcel and the billing option preference input by the particular user.

79. (Original Claim 7 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 6) The computer system of claim 68, said computer system further programmed to:

calculate a shipping rate for shipping the particular parcel to be shipped by the particular user for each of a plurality of services offered by each of the plurality of carriers according to a set of billing option rules for each carrier, and according to a set of pricing rules for each service offered by each carrier as applied to the parcel specifications for the particular parcel and the billing option preference input by the particular user.

810. (Original Claim 8 Currently Amended) A method using a computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels shipped by any one of a plurality of carriers, the method comprising:

applying, in response to a request by any particular user of a plurality of users, a set of billing option rules for each of a plurality of carriers to a single billing option preference input by the particular requesting user, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client computer device having an individual electronic connection to

the global communications network, and wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises at least one of: an indication of billing options acceptable to the carrier and a pricing rule for one or more billing options.

11. (New) The method of Claim 10 wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises an indication of billing options acceptable to the carrier.

12. (New) The method of Claim 10 wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises a pricing rule for one or more billing options.

913. (Original Claim 9 Currently Amended) A method using a computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels shipped by any one of a plurality of carriers, the method comprising:

identifying, in response to a request by any particular user of a plurality of users, each carrier from a plurality of carriers that supports a particular billing option preference input by the particular requesting user for shipping a particular parcel, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global communications network.

~~1014.~~ (Original Claim 10 Currently Amended) A method using a computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels shipped by any one of a plurality of carriers, the method comprising:

collecting as a billing option preference for each particular user of a plurality of users a user input from the particular user of an identification of a billing option preference for parcels to be shipped by the particular user, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client computer having an individual electronic connection to the global communications network; and

storing in a database a record corresponding to each particular user, said record comprising an identifier for the particular user and the billing option preference for the particular user.

4415. (Original Claim 11 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 10) The method of claim ~~40~~14, said method further comprising:

collecting as parcel specifications for a particular parcel, user input from the particular user wherein the parcel specifications comprising at least one of: a package type, a set of package dimensions, or a package weight of the particular parcel;

4216. (Original Claim 12 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 11) The method of claim 4415, said method further comprising:

applying a set of billing option rules for each of a plurality of carriers to the billing option preference and parcel specifications input by the particular user.

4317. (Original Claim 13 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 12) The method of claim 4216, said method further comprising:

determining for each of the plurality of carriers whether the carrier supports the billing option preference according to the billing option rules for the particular carrier as applied to the parcel specifications for the particular parcel and the billing option preference input by the particular user.

4418. (Original Claim 14 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 13) The method of claim 4317, said method further comprising:

calculating a shipping rate for shipping the particular parcel to be shipped by the particular user for each of a plurality of services offered by each of the plurality of carriers according to a set of billing option rules for each carrier, and according to a set of pricing rules for each service offered by each carrier as applied to the parcel specifications for the particular parcel and the billing option preference input by the particular user.

4519. (Original Claim 15 Currently Amended) A computer program product embodying computer program instructions for execution by a computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels shipped by any one of a plurality of carriers, the computer program product comprising:

a set of program instructions for applying, in response to a request by any particular user of a plurality of users, a set of billing option rules for each of a plurality of carriers to a single billing option preference input by the particular requesting user, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global communications network, and wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises at least one of: an indication of billing options acceptable to the carrier and a pricing rule for one or more billing options.

20. (New) The computer program product of Claim 19 wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises an indication of billing options acceptable to the carrier.

21. (New) The computer program product of Claim 19 wherein the set of billing option rules for each carrier comprises a pricing rule for one or more billing options.

4622. (Original Claim 16 Currently Amended) A computer program product embodying computer program instructions for execution by a computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels shipped by any one of a plurality of carriers, the computer program product comprising:

a set of program instructions for identifying, in response to a request by any particular user of a plurality of users, each carrier from a plurality of carriers that supports a particular billing option preference input by the particular requesting user for shipping a particular parcel, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client

computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global communications network.

4723. (Original Claim 17 Currently Amended) A computer program product embodying computer program instructions for execution by a computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels shipped by any one of a plurality of carriers, the computer program product comprising:

a set of program instructions for collecting as a billing option preference for each particular user of a plurality of users a user input from the particular user of an identification of a billing option preference for parcels to be shipped by the particular user, wherein each user accesses the computer system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user client computer having an individual electronic connection to the global communications network; and

a set of program instructions for storing in a database a record corresponding to each particular user, said record comprising an identifier for the particular user and the billing option preference for the particular user.

4824. (Original Claim 18 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 17) The computer program product of claim 4723, said computer program product further comprising:

a set of program instructions for collecting as parcel specifications for a particular parcel, user input from the particular user wherein the parcel specifications comprising at least one of: a package type, a set of package dimensions, or a package weight of the particular parcel;

4925. (Original Claim 19 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 18) The computer program product of claim 4824, said computer program product further comprising:

a set of program instructions for applying a set of billing option rules for each of a plurality of carriers to the billing option preference and parcel specifications input by the particular user.

2026. (Original Claim 20 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 19) The computer program product of claim ~~19~~25, said computer program product further comprising:

a set of program instructions for determining for each of the plurality of carriers whether the carrier supports the billing option preference according to the billing option rules for the particular carrier as applied to the parcel specifications for the particular parcel and the billing option preference input by the particular user.

2427. (Original Claim 21 Currently Amended and Previously Dependent on Original Claim 20) The computer program product of claim ~~20~~26, said computer program product further comprising:

a set of program instructions for calculating a shipping rate for shipping the particular parcel to be shipped by the particular user for each of a plurality of services offered by each of the plurality of carriers according to a set of billing option rules for each carrier, and according to a set of pricing rules for each service offered by each carrier as applied to the parcel specifications for the particular parcel and the billing option preference input by the particular user.